



# Overview of Network Health Assessment Tools and Resources

## Assessing Network Health

The Minnesota Food Charter Network is a meta-network that includes many local, regional, and statewide networks and groups (sometimes called Food Networks, Food Coalitions, Food Policy Councils, or Collaborative Food Organizations, etc.) involving hundreds of individuals who are affiliated with many different organizations. It also includes multiple teams focused on supporting the work of these networks and groups.

Unlike an organization, the Minnesota Food Charter Network is decentralized, involving member-driven relationships that shape its underlying structure and capacity. Promoting the health of the Network, then, involves individual participants, local and regional networks, and teams EACH reflecting on their performance.

Think of many-many feedback loops being created when individuals and local/regional network participants are all assessing key areas related to network health—what’s working well and what isn’t, and what to do about it.

Ongoing self-assessment and reflection by individuals and groups will promote continuous improvement at multiple levels.

## Assessment Tools & Resources

### [Individual Network Participant Self-Assessment Tool](#)

How are you doing in building connections and trust with other members of your network? For a network approach to be truly effective, people need to have the capacity and skills to develop deep and trusting relationships with others. This checklist will help you identify your strengths as a network participant and where you could improve.

**Who should use:** Individual network participants

**How often:** At least annually



### [Team Health Scorecard](#)

Is your Network team high performing? What aspects of the team could be strengthened? This checklist is for members of Minnesota Food Charter Network teams to reflect on the overall health and performance of their team and to agree on priority areas for improvement.

**Who should use:** Members of Minnesota Food Charter Network team

**How often:** At least annually

### [Network Health Scorecard](#)

Is your network engaging people and encouraging them to communicate and work together in new ways? This checklist is for members of an active local, regional, or statewide network or group to reflect on the overall health and performance of their network and to agree on priority areas for improvement. There are also several companion resources you can download and use:

#### [Instructions for administering and analyzing the Network Health Scorecard](#)

Step-by-step instructions for coordinating the administration of the Scorecard, tabulating the results, and preparing a report.

#### [Instructions for reflecting on and using Network Health Scorecard results and recommended resources](#)

A group process for reflecting on Scorecard results and recommended resources for addressing priority areas for improvement.

**Resource:** [Tuning-up a Network](#)

Lays out a simple process for an existing network to examine and tune-up its function and existing structure.

**Resource:** [Actions to Improve Network Health](#)

This resource will help you use the results from the *Network Health Scorecard (NHS)* to identify actions to address priority areas for improvement.



**Resource:** [Building Network Capacity](#)

A critical function of networks is to create an enabling environment, allowing communication to flow, access to resources, opportunities for collective “sense-making” and leadership development. This resource outlines an approach to strengthening the capacity of a network to fulfill these functions.

**Who should use:** Members of a local, regional or statewide network or group

**How often:** At least annually

[Scorecard for Just Starting or Re-Starting Local, Regional or Statewide Networks](#)

Do you know the major steps in launching or re-launching a network? This tool will guide core members through the steps and recommend resources for moving forward. Resources you can download:

**Resource:** [Understanding the Benefits of a Network Approach](#)

Before you can enlist people in building a healthy network, you need to convince them that networks are important. This is a resource for introducing the role of networks and how they differ from other organizational approaches.

**Resource:** [Types of Networks](#)

Intentional networks come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. This resource describes the characteristics of different types of networks and how to pick the approach that will work best for you.

**Resource:** [Introducing a Network Approach to Others](#)

This resource lays out a process and group activities for developing a basic understanding of networks and their benefits

**Resource:** [Steps in Forming or Re-Launching a Network](#)

This resource guides a core group through the steps they need to take to form a new intentional network—or to re-launch one that has been dormant.

**Resource:** [Building Network Capacity](#)

A critical function of networks is to create an enabling environment, allowing communication to flow, access to resources, opportunities for collective “sense-making” and leadership development. This resource outlines an approach to strengthening the capacity of a network to fulfill these functions.

**Who should use:** Core members of a just starting or re-starting network

**How often:** First year of launch or re-launch



### [Social Network Analysis \(Network Mapping\) Resources for Local & Regional Networks](#)

A key ingredient of network effectiveness is connectivity—how and the degree to which members are connected to each other. Nothing increases awareness of networks and gives people concrete ideas of what they can do improve their network than developing a network map.

### [Resources for Hand-Drawing Maps](#)

Hand drawn maps are easy to create and interpret. Network participants can quickly see if they (or their organization) are a bottleneck or if they are not connected to key people.

### [Resources for Generating Maps with Software](#)

Network maps created with special software, can present complex information in a way that makes it easier for members to “see” connections and their patterns. They can depict the flow of communication, untapped resources, people with common interests, or who is missing from the network. A word of caution: It takes human and financial resources to develop and administer a web-based survey, generate the maps, and analyze them. And, the process takes about three-months.

**Who should use:** Local, regional, and statewide networks & groups

**How often:** Annually or very couple years

## Evaluation News Articles

- [Stages of Network Development and Role of Evaluation](#)
- [Overview of Network Health and Evaluation Tools](#)
- [How Network Evaluation Leads to Action](#) (Using data to enhance network effectiveness)
- [How Do People Feel Connected to a Network?](#) (The importance of connectivity to network effectiveness and the role of evaluation)
- [Are You a Network Weaver?](#) (The roles of network champion and ambassador and a checklist to self-assess)
- [Implementing Food Charter Strategies Statewide](#) (Alignment of local and regional networks with Minnesota Food Charter goals and strategies)
- [Mapping the Connectivity of Network Leaders in Minnesota](#) (Creating network maps to assess connectivity)
- [Network Evaluation: Phases and Patterns](#) (Stages of network development and assessing alignment)